THE TOBACCO BILL.

Mr. S. Sankara Pillai.—I beg leave to introduce at the next ordinary meeting of the Council, a Bill to regulate the cultivation, manufacture, import, transport, possession and sale of tobacco in the State. The existing law on the subject is contained in Regulation VIII of 1063, as amended by Regulations II of 1066 and II of 1076. The provisions of these detached Regulations are found to be defective in several respects. The definition of tobacco is not comprehensive enough. No power is taken under the existing Regulation to regulate either the cultivation or the manufacture of tobacco. Unlike the provisions of other Regulations relating to revenue, the existing Regulation throws the burden entirely on the prosecution of proving wilful contravention of the law, and great miscarriage of justice is the result. These and other minor defects which actual experience in working the present law has disclosed, have to be remedied. It is therefore proposed to introduce a Bill sufficiently comprehensive and calculated to remedy the defects stated above.

Permission was granted accordingly.

THE SALT BILL.

Mr. N. Subramania Aiyar.—I beg permission of the Council to introduce a Bill to amend and consolidate the law relating to salt revenue in Travancore.

Permission was granted accordingly.

THE CATTLE TRESPASS REGULATION AMENDMENT BILL.

Mr. N. Subramania Aiyar.—I also beg that permission may be accorded to me to introduce at the next ordinary meeting of the Council, a Bill to amend the Cattle Trespass Regulation, I of 1056.

Permission was granted accordingly.

THE OPIUM BILL.

Mr. A. M. Muthunayagom Pillai.—Sir, I beg to apply for leave to introduce a Bill to regulate the cultivation of the poppy and the manufacture, possession, import, export, transport and sale of opium. The existing Regulation on the subject—VI of 1063—is defective in several particulars, and it is necessary to remedy these defects and place the administration of the opium revenue on a more efficient footing, on the lines of the British Indian Act, I of 1878.

Permission was granted accordingly.

THE HACKNEY CARRIAGE BILL.

Mr. A. M. Muthunayagom Pillai.—Sir, this Bill proposes a new law for the regulation, control and protection of hackney carriages plying for hire for the conveyance of passengers. The necessity for legislation on the subject has long been felt. The Statement of Objects and Reasons published with the draft Bill sufficiently explains, I trust, the main provisions of the proposed law. The object of the Bill is to make provision for the registration of all hackney carriages and to place the same under the supervision and control of the Superintendent of Police; to provide for the hiring of the same at fixed and proper rates, thereby preventing unreasonable and extortionate demands on the part of the owners or drivers of such vehicles; to ensure a decent class of hackney carriages and the orderly and respectable behaviour of the owners and drivers of the same; and to give jurisdiction to Magistrates to determine differences arising between the owners or drivers of hackney carriages and the hirers thereof. I beg to move that the principle of the Bill be affirmed.

Seconded by Mr. S. Sankara Pillai.

Carried.

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Mr. A. M. Muthunayagom Pillai then proposed that the Bill be referred to a Select Committee consisting of Messrs. A. Sri Narayanan Thampi, N. Subramania Iyer and the Mover, to report within two months.

The motion was put and agreed to.

THE COURT FEES BILL.

Mr. A. M. Muthunayagom Pillai.—Sir, on a perusal of the Bill already published, it will be seen that a few important amendments are proposed to be made in the existing provisions of Regulation I of 1062. They relate chiefly to the following matters:—

(1) The levy of fees on documents received in or furnished from, any public office.

(2) The mode of levying fees in suits for establishment of the right of an assignee of land revenue and in suits in which defendants plead a set-off.

(3) The levy of fees on memoranda of appeal against orders relating to compensation in land-acquisition cases.

(4) A new para is added to Section 8 of the existing Regulation whereby, if, in suits for partition or accounts, the Court gives a decree for recovery of property, the court fee on the relief granted is to be paid before execution; a para is also added whereby, if, in suits for recovery of immovable property, the Court decrees that the plaintiff ought to pay further charges (not admitted in the plaint) or value of improvements, court fee on the further amount decreed should be paid before execution.

(5) The refund of court fees to parties in two cases is added to the present Section 10 of Regulation I of 1062.

(6) To the existing list of exemptions from court fees, eight additions have been made.

(7) The levy of fees in stamps, instead of in cash, is regulated by a new Chapter.

(8) The Sirkar is given the right to realise excess fees ordered by Courts, as if the order was a decree in its favor.

From the above statement of amendments embodied in the Bill, it will be seen that some of the provisions impose an additional burden on the litigant public, while some others go to reduce it, and the rest simply relate to purely administrative matters. The reason for these changes is set out in the Statement of Objects and Reasons already in your hands. I beg to commend the Court Fees Bill for the consideration of the Council.

Seconded by Mr. A. Sri Narayanan Thampi.

Mr. K. K. Kuruvila.—This is a fiscal measure and I do not wish to obstruct the policy of the Administration in this direction. But under Section 13, there are 15 classes of documents exempted from payment of fee. I would suggest for the consideration of the Select Committee that one more class be added *viz.*, petitions purporting to be for the benefit of the Administration. Several incidents injurious to Government interests may be exposed, either from envy or ill-will to the wrong-doers or from sympathy towards Government. It may be advisable to encourage the supply of information on such subjects, action upon them being left entirely to the discretion of the authorities to whom the petitions may be addressed.

The Council then affirmed the principle of the Bill, and Mr. A. M Muthunayagom Pillai proposed that the Bill be referred to a Select Committee consisting of Messrs. S. Subramania Iyer, S. Sankara Pillai and the Mover, to report within two months.

The motion was put and agreed to.

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